

A P O L O G Y

FOR THE

Church of England,

With relation to the Spirit of

P E R S E C U T I O N :

For which She is Accused.

I. **O**NE should think, that the Behaviour of the *English Clergy* for some years past, and the present Circumstances in which they are, should set them beyond Slander, and by consequence above *Apolo- gies*; yet since the Malice of her Enemies work against her with so much *Spight*, and since there is no insinuation that carries so much Malice in it, and that seems to have such colours of Truth on it, as this of their having set on a severe *Persecution* against the *Dissenters*, of being still sour'd with that leaven, and of carrying the same implacable hatred to them, which the present Reputation that they have gained, may put them in a further capacity of executing, if another revolution of Affairs should again give them Authority to set about it; it seems necessary to examin it, and that the rather, because some aggravate this so far, as if nothing were now to be so much dreaded as the *Church of England's* getting out of her present distress.

II. If these imputations were charged

on us only by those of the *Church of Rome* we should not much wonder at it; for tho it argues a good degree of Confidence, for any of that Communion to declaim against the Severities that have been put in practice among us, since their *little finger must be heavier than ever our loins were*, and to whose *Scorpions* our *Rods* ought not to be compared; yet after all, we are so much accustomed to their methods, that nothing from them can surprise us. To hear *Papists* declare against *Persecution*, and *Jesuits* cry up *Liberty of Conscience*, are, we confess, unusual things: yet there are some degrees of shame, over which when people are once passed, all things become so familiar to them, that they can no more be put out of countenance. But it seems very strange to us, that *some*, who if they are to be believed, are strict to the severest forms and sub-divisions of the *Reformed Religion*, and that who some years ago were jealous of the smallest steps that the *Court* made, when the danger was more remote; and who cried out *Papery* and *Persecution*, when the Design was so maskt that some

well-meaning men could not miss being deceived by the Promises that were made, & the disguises that were put on; that, I say, these very persons who were formerly so distrustful, should now when the Mask is laid off, and the design is avowed, of a sudden grow to be so believing, as to throw off all distrust, and be so gulled as to betray all; and expose us to the Rage of those, who must needs give some good words, till they have gone the round, and tried how effectually they can divide and deceive us, that so they may destroy us the more easily; this is indeed somewhat extraordinary. They are not so ignorant as not to know, that *Papery* cannot change its nature, and that *Cruelty and Breach of Faith to Hereticks*, are as necessary parts of that Religion, as *Transubstantiation and the Popes Supremacy* are. If *Papists* were not Fools, they must give good Words and fair Promises, till by these they have so far deluded the poor credulous Hereticks, that they may put themselves in a posture to execute the Decrees of their Church against them: and tho we accuse that Religion as guilty both of *Cruelty and Treachery*, yet we do not think em Fools: so till their party is stronger than God be thanked it is at present, they can take no other method than that they take. The *Church of England* was the Word among them some years ago, *Liberty of Conscience* is the Word at present; and we have all possible reason to assure us, that the promises for maintaining the one, will be as religiously kept as we see those are which were lately made with so great profusion of Protestations, and shews of Friendship for the supporting of the other.

III. It were great Injustice to charge all the *Dissenters* with the Impertinencies that have appeared in many *Addresses* of late, or to take our measures of them, from the Impudent strains of an *Allop* or a *Cave*, or from the more Important and now more visible steps that some among them, of a higher form, are every day making; and yet after all this, it cannot be denied but the several bodies of the *Dissenters* have behaved themselves of late like Men that understand too well the true Interest of the *Protestant*

Religion, and of the *English Government*, to sacrifice the whole and themselves in Conclusion to their private resentments: I hope the same justice will be allowed me in stating the matter relating to the so much desired *Persecution*, set on by the *Ch of Eng.* and that I may be suffered to distinguish the heats of some angry and deluded men, from the Doctrine of the Church, and the practices that have been authorised in it; that so I may shew, that there is no reason to infer from past Errors, that we are incurable; or that new Opportunities inviting us again into the same severities, are like to prevail over us to commit the same follies over again. I will first state what is past, with the sincerity that becomes one that would not *lye for God*; that is, not afraid nor ashamed to confess faults, that will neither aggravate nor extenuate them beyond what is just, and that yet will avoid the saying any thing that may give any cause of offence to any party in the Nation.

IV. I am sorry that I must confess, that all the parties among us, have shewed, that as their turn came to be uppermost, they have forgot the same Principles of Moderation and Liberty which they all claimed when they were oppressed. If it should shew too much ill nature to examine what the *Presbytery* did in *Scotland* when the *Covenant* was in Dominion, or what the *Independents* have done in *New-England*, why may not I claim the same privileged with relation to the *Church of England*, if severities have been committed by her while she bore rule? Yet it were as easie as it would be invidious to shew, that both *Presbyterians* and *Independents* have carried the principle of Rigor in the point of Conscience much higher, and have acted more implacably upon it than ever the *Church of England* has done, even in its angriest fits; so that none of them can much reproach another for their excesses in those matters. And as of all the *Religions* in the world the *Church of Rome* the most persecuting, and the most bound by her principles to be unalterably Cruel; so the *Church of England* is the least persecuting in her principles, and the least obliged to repeat any errors to which

which the intrigues of Courts or the passions incident to all parties may have engaged her, of any National Church in Europe. It cannot be said to be any part of our Doctrine, when we came out of one of the blackest persecutions that is in History, I mean *Q. Maryes*, we shewed how little we retained of the Cruelty of that Church, which had provoked us so severely; when not only no Enquiries were made into the illegal acts of Fury, that were committed in that persecuting Reign, but even the persecutors themselves lived among us at ease and in peace; and no Penal Law was made except against publick exercise of that Religion, till a great many Rebelions and Treasons extorted them from us for our own preservation. This is an instance of the Clemency of our Church, that perhaps cannot be matched in History: and why should it not be supposed, that if God should again put us in the state in which we were of late, that we should rather imitate so Noble a pattern, than return to those mistakes of which we are now ashamed?

V. It is to be considered, that upon the late Kings Restauration, the remembrance of the former War, the ill Usage that our Clergy had met with in their *Sequestrations*, the angry Resentments of the *Cavalier-Party*, who were ruined by the War, the Interest of the Court to have all those principles condemned, that had occasioned it, the heat that all parties that have been ill used are apt to fall into upon a Revolution; but above all, the practices of those who have still blown the Coals, and set us one against another, that so they might not only have a divided force to deal with, but might by turns make the Divisions among us serve their Ends: all these, I say, concurred to make us lose the happy opportunity that was offer'd in the year 1660. to have healed all our Divisions, and to have triumphed over all the *Dissenters*; not by ruining them, but by overcoming them with a spirit of *Love* and *Gentleness*; which is the only Victory that a generous and Christian temper can desire. In short, unhappy *Councils* were followed, and several Laws were made, But

after all, it was the *Court-party* that carried it for rougher methods: some considerable Accidents, not necessary to be here mentioned, as they stopped the mouths of some that had formed a wiser Project, so they gave a faral Advantage to angry and crafty men, that to our misfortune, had too great a stroak in the conduct of our Affairs at that time, This Spirit of Severity was heightened by the Practices of the Papists, who engaged the late King, in December, 1662. to give a Declaration for *Liberty of Conscience*. Those who knew the secret of his Religion, as they saw that it aimed at the introduction of *Popery*, so they thought there was no way so effectual, for the keeping out of *Popery*, as the maintaining the *Uniformity*, and the suppressing of all designs for a *Toleration*. But while those who managed this, used a due reserve, in not discovering the secret motive that led them to it, and others flew into severity, as the principle in vogue: and thus all the slacknings of the rigour of the Laws, during the first Dutch War, that were set on upon the pretence of quieting the Nation, and of encouraging Trade, were resisted by the Instruments of an honest Minister of State, who knew as well then, as we do now, what lay still at bottom, when *Liberty of Conscience* was pretended.

VI. Upon that Ministers *Disgrace*, some that saw but the half of the Secret, perceiving in the Court a great inclination to *Toleration*, and being willing to take measures quite different from those of the former Ministry, they entred into a treaty for a *Comprehension of some Dissenters*, and the *Tolerating of others*; and some Bishops and Clergymen, that were inferior to none of the Age in which they lived, for true Worth and a right Judgment of things, engaged so far, and with so much success into this project, that the matter seemed done, all things being concerted among some of the most considerable men of the different parties. But the dislike of that Ministry, and the Jealousie of the ill designs of the Court, gave so strong a prejudice against this, that the proposition could not be so much as hearkned unto by the House of

Commons : and then it appeared how much the whole *Popish Party* was alarm'd at the project : it is well known with how much Detestation they speak of it to this day : tho' we are now so fully satisfied of their Intentions to destroy us, that the Deal which they pretended for us, in supposing that design, can no more pass upon us.

VII. At last, in the year 1672. the design for *Popery* discovering it self, the end that the *Court* had in favouring a *Toleration* became more Visible : and when the *Parliament* met, that condemn'd the *Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*, the Members of the *House of Commons*, that either were *Dissenters*, or that favoured them, behaved themselves so worthily in concurring with the *Church of England*, for stifling that *Toleration*, choosing rather to lose the benefit of it, than to open a breach at which *Popery* should come in, that many of the members that were for the *Church of England*, promised to procure them a bill of *Ease for Protestant Dissenters*. But the *Session* was not long enough for bringing that to perfection ; and all the *Sessions* of that *Parliament* after that, were spent in such a continual struggle between the *Court* and *Country Party*, that there was never room given for calm and wise Consultations : yet tho' the *Party* of the *Church of England* did not perform what had been promised by some Leading men to the *Dissenters*, there was little or nothing done against them, after that, till the year 1681. so that for about nine years together they had their Meetings almost as publickly and as regularly as the *Church of England* had their Churches, and in all that time, whatsoever particular hardships any of them might have met with in some corners of *England*, it cannot be denied but they had the free Exercise of their Religion, at least in most parts.

VIII. In the year 1678. things began to change their face : it is known, that upon the breaking out of the *popish plot*, the *Clergy* did Universally express a great desire for coming to some temper in the points of *Conformity* : all sorts and ranks of the

Clergy seemed to be so well disposed towards it, that if it had met with a suitable entertainment, matters might probably have been in a great measure compos'd. But the Jealousie that those who managed the Civil concerns of the Nation in the *House of Commons*, took off all that was done at *Court*, or proposed by it, occasioned a fatal breach in our publick Councils : in which division, the *Clergy* by their principles, and interests, and their disposition to believe well of the *Court*, were determined to be of the Kings side. They thought it was a sin to mistrust the late Kings Word, who assur'd them of his steadiness to the *Protestant Religion* so often, that they firmly depended on it : and his present Majesty gave them so many Assurances of his maintaining still the *Church of England*, that they believed him likewise : and so thought that the Exclusion of him from the Crown, was a degree of rigour to which they in Conscience could not consent ; upon which they were generally cried out on, as the Betrayers of the Nation, and of the *Protestant Religion* : Those who demanded the *Exclusion*, and some other securities, to which the *Bishops* would not consent in *Parliament*, looked on them as the chief hindrance that was in their way : and the License of the Press at that time was such, that many Libels and some severe Discourses were published against them. Nor can it be denied, that many *Churchmen*, who understood not the principles of Humane Society, and the rules of our Government, so well as other points of Divinity, writ several Treatises concerning the measures of submission, that were then as much censured, as their performances since against *Popery* have been deservedly admired. All this gave such a Jealousy of them to the Nation, that it must be confessed, that the Spirit which was then in fermentation went very high against the *Church of England*, as a Confederate, at least, to *Popery* and Tyranny. Nor were several of the *Nonconformists* wanting to inflame this dislike ; all secret propitious for accommodating our differences were so coldly entertained, that they were

were scarce hearkned unto. The Propositions which an Eminent *Divine* made even in his Books writ against *Separation*, shewed that while we maintained the War in the way of dispute, yet we were still willing to *Treat*: for that *Great Man* made not those advances towards them without consulting with his Superiours. Yet we were then fatally given up to a spirit of Dissention: and tho the Parliament in 1680, entered upon a project for healing our differences, in which great steps were made to the removing of all the occasions of our Contentions; the *Leaders of the Dissenters*, to the amasement of all persons, made no account of this: and even seemed uneasy at it, of which the Earl of *Nottingham* and Sir *Thomas Clarges*, that set on that Bill with much zeal, can give a more particular account. All these things concurred to make those of the *Church of England* conclude, a little too rashly, that their ruin was resolved on; and then it was no wonder if the spirit of a Party, the remembrance of the *last War*, the present prospect of *Danger*, and above all, the great favour that was shewed them at *Court*, threw them fatally into some angry and Violent Counsels; self-preservation is very natural: and it is plain, that many of them took that to be the Case, so that truly speaking, it was not so much at first a spirit of Persecution, as a desire of disabling those who they believed intended to ruin them from effecting their designs, that set them on to all those unhappy things that followed. They were animated to all they did by the continued earnestness of the *King* and *Duke*, and of their *Ministers*. That Reproach of *Justice*, and of the profession of the *Law*, who is now so high, was singled out for no other end, but to be their *Common Hangman* over *England*; of whom the late *King* gave this true character. *That he had never Wit, Law, nor Common Sense; but that he had the Impudence of ten carted Whore in him.* Another *Buffoon*, was hired to plague the Nation with three or four Papers a week, which to the Reproach of the Age in which we live, had but too great and too general an

effect, for poisoning the spirits of the *Clergy*. But those who knew how all this was managed, saw that it was not only set on, but still kept up by the *Court*. If any of the *Clergy* had but preached a word for moderation, he had a chiding sent him presently from the *Court*, and he was from that day marked out as a *disaffected person*: and when the *Clergy of London* did very worthily refuse to give Informations against their Parishioners that had not always Conformed, the design having been form'd, upon that to bring them into the *Spiritual Courts*, and Excommunicate them, and make them lose their right of *Voting*, that so the *Charter of London* might have been delivered up when so many *Citizens* were by such means shut out of the *Common-Council*; we remember well how severely they were Censured for this, by some that are now dead, and others that are yet alive. I will not go further into this matter: I will not deny but many of the *Dissenters* were put to great hardships, in many parts of *England*. I cannot deny it, and I am sure I will never justify it. But this I will positively say, having observed it all narrowly, that he must have the brow of a *Jesuite*, that can cast this wholly on the *Church of England*, and free the *Court* of it. The beginnings and the progress of it came from the *Court*, and from the *Popish party*: and tho perhaps every one does not know all the secrets of this matter, that others may have found out, yet no man was so ignorant as not to see what was the chief spring of all those Irregular motions that some of us made at that time: so upon the whole matter, all that can be made out of this, is, that the passions and infirmities of some of the *Church of England*, being unhappily stirred up by the *Dissenters*, they were fatally conducted by the *Popish party*, to be the instruments in doing a great deal of mischief.

IX. It is not to be doubted, but though some weaker men of the *Clergy* may perhaps still retain their little peevish animosities against the *Dissenters*; yet the wiser and more serious heads of that great and *Worthy Body*, see now their Error: they see

who drove them on in it, till they hoped to have ruined them by it. And as they have appeared against *Papery*, with as great a strength of Learning and of firm steadiness as perhaps can be met with in all Church-History, so it cannot be doubted, but their reflections on the dangers into which our Divisions have thrown us, have given them truer Notions with relation to a rigorous *Conformity*; and that the just Detestation which they have expressed of the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* has led them to consider and abhor one of the worst things in it, I mean their *Severity* towards *Hereticks*. And the ill use that they see the *Court* has made of their Zeal for supporting the Crown, to justify the subversion of our Government that is now set on from some of their large and unwary expressions, will certainly make them hereafter more cautious in meddling with *Politics*: the *Bishops* have under their hands both disowned that wide extent of the *Prerogative*, to the overturning of the *Law*, and declared their disposition to come to a *Temper* in the matters of *Conformity*; and there seems to be no doubt left of the sincerity of their Intentions in that matter. Their Piety and Vertue, and the prospect that they now have of suffering themselves, put us beyond all doubt as to their sincerity, and if ever God in his Providence brings us again into a settled State, out of the storm into which our passions and folly, as well as the Treachery of others has brought us, it cannot be imagined, that the *Bishops* will go off from those moderate Resolutions, which they have now declared: and they continuing firm to them, the weak and indiscreet passions of any of the inferior *Clergy*, must needs vanish, when they are under the conduct of wise and worthy Leaders. And I will boldly say this, that if the *Church of England*, after she has got out of this Storm, will return to hearken to the peevishness of some *four* men, she will be abandoned both of *God* and *man*, and will set both Heaven and Earth against Her. The Nation sees too visibly, how dear the Dispute about *Conformity* has cost us, to stand any more upon

such *Punctillo's*: and THOSE in whom our Deliverance is wrapped up, understand this matter too well, and judge too right of it, to imagin that ever they will be *Priestridden* in this point. So that all considerations concur to make us conclude, that there is no danger of our splitting a second time upon the same Rock: and indeed, if any Argument were wanting to compleat the certainty of this point, the Wise and Generous behaviour of the main body of the *Dissenters*, in this present Juncture, has given them so just a Title to our Friendship that we must resolve to set all the World against us, if we can ever forget it; and if we do not make them all the returns of Ease and Favour, when it is in our power to do it.

X. It is to be hoped, that when this is laid together, it will have that effect on all Sober and True Protestants, as to make them forget the little angry Heats that have been among us, and even to forget the injuries that have been done us: all that we do now one against another, is to shorten the work of our Enemies, by destroying one another, which must in Conclusion turn to all our Ruin. It is a madmans Revenge to destroy our Friends that we may do a pleasure to our Enemies, upon their giving us some good words; and if the *Dissenters* can trust to *Papists*, after the usage that the Church of *England* has met with at their hands, all the comfort that they can promise themselves, when *Papery* begins to act its natural part among us, and to set *Smithfield* again in a Fire, is that which befel some *Quakers* at *Rome*, who were first put into the *Inquisition*, but were afterwards removed to *Bedlam*: so tho those false Brethren among the *Dissenters*, who deceive them at present, are certainly no *Changelings*, but know well what they are doing; yet those who can be cheated by them, may well claim the Privilege of a *Bedlam*, when their Folly has left them no other retreat.

XI. I will not digress too far from my present purpose; nor enter into a discussion of the *Dispensing power*, which was so effectually overthrown the other day at the
Kings

Kings Bench Bar, that I am sure all the Authority of the *Bench* it self is no more able to Support it: yet some late *Papers* in favour of it, give me occasion to add a little relating to that point. It is true, the Assertor of the *Dispensing power*, who has lately appeared *with allowance*, pretends, that it can only be applied to the *Test* for publick Employments: for he owns, that the *Test* for both Houses of Parliament is left entire, as not within the compass of this extent of the Prerogative: but another Writer, whom by his sense we must conclude an *Irish man*, by his brow a *Jesuit*, and by the bare designation in the Title page, of *James Stewarts letter*, a *Quaker*, goes a strain higher, and thinks the King is so absolutely the Sovereign as to the Legislative part of our Government, that he may dissolve even the *Parliament Test*: so nimble has he leapt from being a *Secretary to a Rebellion*, to be an *Advocate for Tyranny*. He fancies, that because no *Parliament* can bind up another, therefore they cannot limit the *Preliminaries* to a subsequent Parliament. But upon what is it then, that Counties have but two Knights, and Burroughs as many: that men below such a value have no vote, that *Sheriffs* only receive Writs and return Elections, besides many more necessary requisites to the making a legal Parliament. In short, if Laws do not regulate the Election and Constitution of a Parliament, all these things may be overthrown, and the King may cast the whole Government in a new Mould, as well as dissolve the obligation that is on the *Members* of Parliament for taking the *Test*. It is true, that as soon as a Parliament is legally met and constituted, it is tyed by no Laws, so far as not to repeal them: but the *Preliminaries* to a Parliament are still sacred, as long as the Law stands that selected them: for the *Members* are still in the quality of ordinary Subjects, and not entred upon their share in the Legislative power, till they are constituted in a *Parliament* Legally chosen and Lawfully assembled, that is, *having observed all the Requisites of the Law*. But I leave that impudent Letter to return to the most Apo-

logy that has been yet writ for the *Dispensing power*. It yields that the King cannot *abrogate* Laws, and pretends only that he can dispense with them: and the distinction it puts between *abrogation* and *Dispensation*, is, that the one is a total repeal of the Law, and that the other is only a slackning of its obligatory force, with Relation to a particular man or to any body of men; so that according to him, a simple *Abrogation*, or a total *Repeal*, is beyond the compass of the Prerogative. I desire then that this Doctrine may be applied to the following words of the Declaration; from which the Reader may infer whether these do import a *Simple Abrogation*, or not, and by consequence, if the Declaration is not illegal; *We do hereby further Declare, That it is our Royal will and pleasure that the Oaths commonly called the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, and also the several Tests and Declarations shall not at any time hereafter, be required to be taken, Declared, or subscribed by any person or persons whatsoever, who is or shall be Employed in any Office or Place of Trust, either Civil or Military, under us or in our Government.* This is plain English, and needs no Commentary. That paper offers likewise an Expedient for securing Liberty of Conscience, by which it will be set beyond even the *Dispensing power*; and that is, that by Act of Parliament all *Persecution* may be declared to be a thing evil in it self, and then the Prerogative cannot reach it. But unless this Author fancies, that a Parliament is that which those of the Church of Rome believe a *General Council* to be, I mean *Infallible*, I do not see that such an Act would signify any thing at all. An Act of Parliament cannot change the nature of things which are fullen, and will not alter, because a hard word is clapt on them in an Act of Parliament; nor can that make that which is not evil of it self become evil of it self: for can any Act of Parliament make the *Clipping of Money*, or the not *Burying in Woollen* evil of it self? Such an Act were indeed null of it self, and would sink with its own weight, even without the burden of the Prerogative to press it down: and yet

upon such a sandy foundation would these men have us build all our Hopes and our Securities. Another topick like this, is, that we ought to trust to the truth of our *Religion*, and the providence and protection of God, and not to lean so much to *Laws and Testis*: All this were very pertinent, if God had not already given us humane Assurances against the Rage of our Enemies, which we are now desired to abandon, that so we may fall an easie and cheap Sacrifice to those who wait for the favourable moment to destroy us: by the same reason they may perswade us to take off all our *Doors*, or at least all our *Locks* and *Bolts*, and to sleep in this exposed condition, trusting to Gods *Protection*: The simile may appear a little too high, tho it is really short of the matter; for we had better trust our selves to all the Thieves and Robbers of the twon, who would be perhaps contented with a part of our Goods, than to those whose designs are equally against both Soul and Body, and all that is dear to us.

XII. I will only add another Reflexion upon the renewing of the *Declaration* this year, which has occasioned the present storm upon the *Clergy*. It is repeated to us that so we may see that the *King* continues firm to the Promises he made last year.

Yet when men of Honour have once given their word, they take it ill if any do not trust to that, but must needs have it repeated to them: in the ordinary commerce of the world, the repeating of promises over and over again, is rather a ground of *Suspicion* than of *Confidence*: and if we judge of the accomplishment of all the other parts of the *Declaration*, from that one, which relates to the maintaining of the Church of England, as by *Law established*, the proceedings against the *Fellows of Magdalen Colledge*, gives us no reason to conclude, that this will be like the *Laws of the Medes and Persians*, which alter not: all the talk of the *New Magna Charta* cannot lay us asleep, when we see so little regard had to the *Old one*. As for the security which is offered us in this repeating of the *Kings* promises, we must crave leave to remember, that the *King of France*, even after he had resolved to break the *Edict of Nantes*, yet repeated in above an hundred *Edicts*, that were real and visible violations of that *Edict*, a clause confirmatory of the *Edict of Nantes*, declaring that he would never *Violate* it: and in that we may see what account is to be had of all promises made to *Hereticks*, in matters of Religion, by any Prince of the Roman Communion, but more particularly by a Prince who has put the conduct of his Conscience in the hands of a Jesuite.

F I N I S.